

Annex K

Equivalence Scheme

As detailed in the introduction to this booklet, the Scottish Government has applied to the European Commission for permission to implement Greening through an Equivalence Scheme in Scotland from 2016. The details of any scheme are still to be considered by the Commission and may be subject to change. As such, the details below should not be taken as the final content of the Equivalence scheme.

The Equivalence Scheme incorporates all the existing elements of Greening as detailed in this guidance plus additional elements for Crop Diversification and Permanent Grassland, described below. Claimants who are exempt under the standard greening requirements will remain exempt under the Equivalence Scheme.

Crop Diversification

Claimants can **choose** to meet **either** the standard crop diversification requirement **or** one of the equivalent practices listed in the table below (or a combination of both equivalent practices over 25 per cent of arable land).

Greening practice	Equivalent certification scheme practice	
Crop diversification	Winter soil cover	Ensure that 25 per cent of arable land is covered by winter soil cover between 1 October and 31 December
Crop diversification	Catch crops	Ensure that 25 per cent of arable land is covered by catch crops between 1 October and 31 December

Permanent Grassland

In addition to the standard permanent grassland requirement, as described in this booklet, claimants **must** meet the equivalent Nutrient Management Plan requirement on all fields containing permanent grassland except

- fields which also contain arable land
- fields in NVZ areas.

Greening practice	Equivalent certification scheme practice	
Permanent grassland	Nutrient management plan	Farmers must complete a table identifying how much inorganic fertiliser and lime they intend to apply on each field during the scheme year.

Claimants will be encouraged to base their nutrient management plan on the results of a soil pH test, although this will not be compulsory. If the soil pH is low, applying lime can improve the efficiency with which grass takes up nitrogen, potentially improving the productivity of the sward as well as reducing nitrous oxide greenhouse gas emissions and avoiding diffuse pollution of watercourses.

For fields on which the claimant does not intend to apply fertiliser or lime (for example on rough grazing fields or other semi-natural areas where applying fertiliser or lime is subject to the Agricultural EIA Regulations), this should be indicated by a zero in the nutrient management plan.

Will the options be approved as submitted?

We anticipate further discussion with the Commission who may seek amendments to our proposals prior to approval.

When will we know what is to be implemented in Scotland?

We await a response from the Commission and will provide an update when more details are available.

What are the implications of the Equivalence Scheme?

Participants in the Basic Payment Scheme will be required to meet all elements of the greening requirements as detailed in this booklet (including exemptions). Subject to the Equivalence Scheme being approved by the Commission (and any amendments required to the content of the scheme), non-exempt claimants will need to meet the following greening requirements, where relevant on their land:

Crop diversification: either the standard crop diversification requirement **or** the equivalent catch crop or winter cover practices described above.

Permanent grassland: the standard permanent grassland requirement **and** the equivalent nutrient management plan requirement described above.

EFA: the standard EFA requirement.